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# URBAN RENEWAL COORDINATING COMMITTEE
## October 22, 1959

A meeting of the Urban Renewal Coordinating Committee was held on Thursday, October 22, 1959, at the Planning Board Hearing Room, City Hall Annex, at 10:45 A.M.

Committee members present included Wm. Arthur Reilly, Chairman; Donald M. Graham; Thomas J. Hughes; Robert M. Morgan; Thomas J. McCormick; Timothy J. O'Connor; John A. Murray; and Vincent Ciampa. The following members were unable to be present because of other commitments:
Dr. John H. Cauley, Paul H. Hines, Robert P. Shea, Frank R. Kelley, Joseph W. Lund, Kane Simonian and William F. Lally. However, Mr. Lund and Mr. Simonian were represented by Lloyd Sinclair; Dr. Cauley by Frank Gens. Others present included Edmund Morgan, Chief Inspector of the Building Department, and Daniel Agnetta, Assistant to the Director of Demolition.

Prior to the opening of the meeting, Mr. Costello distributed copies of the "Action Reporter".

The reading of the minutes of the previous meeting was dispensed with, as each member had received a copy of same subsequent to the last meeting and, as no objections or dissensions were raised, it was assumed that said minutes were automatically accepted and approved.

At the request of the Chairman, Mr. McCormick submitted the following report:
"In accordance with the request of this Committee, I have already submitted a supplementary report, dated September 23, 1959, on Renewal Activity in the Mt. Bowdoin-Codman Improvement Area in Dorchester. I was out to this area on Monday night and found that the Citizens' Committee has a new slate of officers. They intend to hold business meetings for a change, and will attempt to build up a permanent organization with dues-paying members rather than confining meetings to a group of speakers.

"Inspections have been completed in the Greenwood area, but inspections were not as extensive as they were in the Mt. Bowdoin area. We met with three or four representatives of the Ward 14 Committee and they are endeavoring to reactivate citizens' participation here."

Mr. Edmund Morgan interrupted at this point and stated that the Building Department has two inspectors in the Mt. Bowdoin area at the present time, and the area has been pretty well cleaned up. He estimated that there are about 30 to 35 minor complaints to be adjusted, and assured the Committee that these would be adjusted in the immediate future. Mr. McCormick then reported that the Public Works Department had awarded a contract for the remaining streets in the Mt. Bowdoin area and have advertized for six streets in the Blue Hill-Greenwood area. He reported further that there are nine sidewalks in the Mt. Bowdoin area which still have to be

done but, unfortunately, because of lack of funds in the budget, they cannot be done this year. The Chairman remarked that provision for sufficient funds in the 1960 budget must be considered when budget requests are being prepared.

Mr. Ciampa reported that the Dorchester Housing group made a house to house survey of the M . Bowdoin area and found that many people in the better sections of the area were unaware of the program that was going on, which proved that many people don't read the local Dorchester paper. He recommended that we give some thought to extending our areas of communication in order that a larger number of people would be reached than is being reached at the present time. He then referred to the Norwell Street area and inquired as to what was being done by the Planning Board. Mr. Graham, the Planning Administrator, stated that the Planning Board has come up with several recommendations or plans, but has not made a definite recommendation as yet. After brief discussion on the matter and after a motion was made by Mr. O'Connor and seconded by Mr. Ciampa, it was

> VOTED: To have the Planning Board submit, at an early date, either a definite or alternate plan or plans for the improvement of the Norwell Street area.

Reverting back to the discussion initiated by Mr. Ciampa regarding the possible expansion of our present system of circulating information throughout a district being considered for Urban Renewal activities, Mr. McCormick stated: "In the Mt. Bowdoin district we had planned to run a full-page ad in the local newspaper and distribute pamphlets from door to door. However, funds were unavailable, and it was necessary to change our plans. Ninety percent of lighting work on 22 streets in this area has been completed. However, people believe that something bigger should have been done. The problem now is to keep the local committee active."

The Chairman was of the opinion that there was no further need for an active committee in view of the fact that the area has been practically completed, but Mr. Ciampa pointed out that in order to maintain the area and keep it up to par, an active committee is necessary. It was requested by Mr. McCormick and Mr. Sinclair that an effort be made by the Building Department to produce more accurate figures on the number of permits issued in the Mt. Bowdoin area for remodelling, renovations and repairs, so that we can arrive at some figure to apply to the voluntary work performed by home owners in the area. Mr. Edmund Morgan believed that he could come up with a figure that would not be too far out of line with the actual work accomplished.

In the absence of both Mr. Lund and Mr. Simonian, the Chairman suggested that Mr. Sinclair submit a report on the various projects under control of the Redevelopment Authority and a progress report on the proposed Office of Redevelopment as recommended by the Boston Municipal Research Bureau. Mr. Lloyd's remarks, in part, follow herewith: "Insofar as my program goes, at the September 15th meeting it was suggested,

in order to aid Mr. McCormick, that I might start on the organizing of a citizens group, presently designated as the Ward 14 Citizens Committee. Two meetings have been held with the group, one on October 5th and the other on October 15th. They are not completely organized as yet, and a complete sense of direction is still lacking. The Chairman, a man named Tucker, has not been able to attend the two previous meetings, and out of the four persons who I met, only one lived in the area. However, they have indicated that they are interested in setting up a demonstration project in the area, but I informed them that the City would not participate in such a project unless they have a specific program outlined. Tom McCormick and John Murray attended the second meeting, and John Murray answered many questions concerning his demolition program. We will continue to have weekly meetings and if anyone from this committee desires to join with us at any of these meetings, he is entirely welcome. In the meantime, we will discuss a program for the area and hope, by the beginning of next year, that we will be able to present a more definite program insofar as commitments from the City are concerned.

"Regarding the status of the various Urban Renewal projects, I submit the following:

"Government Center Project

Plans cannot be completed for the project until negotiations with Mr. Floete of General Service Administration on the proposed Federal office building site have been resolved. To date, Mr. Floete has agreed to an alternate (to "newspaper row" site) site but has rejected further consideration of the Sudbury-Hanover site. Further, Mr. Floete has again requested the proposed City Hall site (Cornhill to Hanover) for the Federal building. A visit to Washington by Mayor Hynes and Mr. Simonian is scheduled for next week to review the exchange of the proposed City Hall and Federal Building sites.

The Authority is now considering the preparation of an application to U.R.A. for a Capital Grant Reservation for the Government Center, since the project is now eligible for Federal Aid under the 1959 Housing Act. Current estimates indicate that the City of Boston will save approximately $7 million if the project becomes federally aided.

"West End Redevelopment Project

The Authority is proceeding with relocation and demolition in advance of schedule. - To date: approximately 450 families remain out of approximately 2580 on site originally, and 460 buildings remain out of 876 with 150 additional buildings released to the contractor for demolition.

The West End Revised Redevelopment Plan has received preliminary approval from U.R.A.

Copies of the Revised plan are available to members of the Coordinating Committee.

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The Authority will shortly present the revised plan to the Boston City Council although official approval of the plan by the City Council is not required. It is hoped that new construction will be underway by December.

"Mattapan Redevelopment Project

Negotiations with several private redevelopers are still underway to develop the area as a city project without federal aid. F.H.A. is now reviewing a proposal for construction of 6 to 8 story apartment buildings in this area rather than the duplex housing proposed under the former plan.

"Washington Park and Roxbury Renewal Areas

The Authority is still awaiting U.R.A. official approval of the Survey and Planning Application for the Washington Park 186 acre Renewal Area. We have now been awaiting U.R.A. approval for five months and anticipating acceptance daily for the past month.

The S. & P. Application for the larger 1000 acre Roxbury Renewal Area has been withdrawn at the request of U.R.A. By withdrawal of the larger area, Washington Park acceptance was guaranteed and the City of Boston became entitled to capital grant reservations of smaller amounts for additional clearance projects.

The Authority is now considering requesting the City Council for planning funds for the remainder of the Roxbury Renewal Area in order to proceed with preparation of plans and anticipating a 3/4 federally aided project for execution of the project later on.

"Whitney Redevelopment Area

Approval of this project by the State Housing Board is anticipated this week.

Detailed engineering surveys, acquisition, relocation and demolition will follow the approvals.

New construction is not expected to begin until the Spring of 1960.

"New York Streets Project Extension

The Authority is now receiving proposals for the preparation of a plan for the proposed extension of the N. Y. Streets Project into the Castle Square Area of the South End.

Tentative boundaries for the project have been designated as Washington, Dover, Tremont, and Castle Streets. The present proposal is for a city project without federal aid.

Mr. Sinclair then submitted a report of the sub-committee, appointed recently to make preliminary arrangements for the possible adoption of the Municipal Research Bureau recommendations, which he read and which is being incorporated as a part of these minutes. He then informed the Committee that Redevelopment Authority members would not commit themselves to the Municipal Research Bureau recommendations and could not formally vote for the authorization of any specific time to be devoted by him to the functions of the sub-committee. However, both Mr. Simonian and Mr. Lund agreed that the development of an Urban Renewal Program for 1960 would be worth while and recommended that the greater part of his time be devoted to this phase of planning.

After brief discussion on the report of the sub-committee recommendations, and after a motion made by Mr. Graham and seconded by Mr. Murray, it was

VOTED:

1. That the function of the sub-committee be re-defined as follows: To prepare a statement of priority problems and recommendations as the basis for a total 1960 Urban Renewal Program for review by the Urban Renewal Coordinating Committee and submission to the new Mayor in January, 1960;

2. That the programs and policies of the Urban Renewal Coordinating Committee, as well as all their private and public agencies, be intensively reviewed for suitability of incorporation in the new program;

3. That development of a 1960 Urban Renewal Program should include the following general areas of major concern: Administration - Code Enforcement - Community Organization - Methods of Financing - Housing - Land Development - Legal Framework - Municipal Land Policy - and New and Improved Transportation Community Facilities.

After the above vote, the Chairman remarked "In view of the Redevelopment Authority's reluctance to approve of the Municipal Research Bureau's recommendations in toto, the sub-committee is, nevertheless, proceeding according to the intent of this committee's desires. If the final report of this Committee is what we anticipate it will be, it will be of great help to the new Mayor and the new administration will be on the road to a fast start."

A discussion then developed on what projects should be given priority at this time. It was agreed that present projects already planned should be followed through to completion, and that other studies should be inaugurated at the earliest possible date. Ed Morgan of the Building Department suggested that the lower end of South Boston be given consideration for clearing, including the market terminal on Southampton Street, where there appears to be a heavy demand for commercial developments. Robert Morgan suggested that the Brighton area be given consideration, and Mr. Graham

suggested that the Hyde Park-Readville areas also be considered. Another suggestion of Mr. Edmund Morgan concerned a study toward the centralizing of industries, which everyone agreed is an important factor in attracting commercial and industrial organizations here. The Chairman pointed out that the Greater Boston Economic Study Committee recommended that the up-grading of buildings in the Batterymarch and India Streets sections of the city would revitalize this particular area, and expressed the opinion that this recommendation would give strength to some of the proposals and suggestions submitted here today.

The Chairman expressed the gratitude of the Coordinating Committee for the sub-committee's willingness to go ahead in light of the circumstances and limitations that are placed upon them, especially from the standpoint of a lack of funds with which to plan and work.

At the request of the Chairman, Mr. Murray submitted the following Report on Demolition:

"We have about $38,000. unencumbered in the budget and we are trying to clean up the worst cases we have at the present time. We are not stopping the processing of cases, regardless of whether or not we have money available. We are going ahead with the sending out of preliminary notices. Then, when we run out of money or before we run out of money, we will prepare a list of what we think can be put under contract before January 1st and what we believe the real urgent cases are. We will then take these cases up with the Budget officers and find out if we can get more money. If not, I assume the cases can be worked out beginning January 1st of next year, when it will be possible to use some funds in anticipation of the passage of the 1960 budget. There has been quite a lot of progress in the last couple of months. A lot of wall jobs were taken care of and, also, quite a few demolitions.

"There has been more work done by private owners recently than in the past. I recommend to the Advisory Committee that some of its members sit down with the insurance underwriters and try to get them to restudy some of those areas which are now blocked insofar as insurance is concerned. There has been a considerable decrease in the number of fire runs in certain areas of the City. In one Roxbury area, the Fire Prevention Bureau gave me a list yesterday indicating that there were approximately 400 less fire runs in the first ten months of this year than during the same period in 1958. These reductions in fire runs are due to the elimination of hazardous buildings. In South Boston, there has been a decrease of 200 fire runs for the first ten months of this year, as against the same period in 1958. I am going to make a list of these figures and send them along to Committee members.

"Since the last meeting, I proposed a demonstration project for the rehabilitation of some of our city-owned buildings in the Charlestown area by converting them into apartment buildings. The present plan would call for

24 to 30 apartments. It appears to me, from preliminary figures studied, that this would be feasible. I have been working with Peter Turchon, Ed Morgan, Bill Johnson of the Redevelopment Authority, and Herman Carp of the Real Property Department. Under this plan the Redevelopment Authority would prepare plans and specifications for the remodeling and would submit cost estimates. At that point they would work in conjunction with the Federal Housing Administration, which agency has agreed to cooperate in the matter. This area is located between Main Street and High Street, about two-third's way up the hill. If the figures line up to the satisfaction of all concerned, the F.H.A. will give an informal commitment to the effect that it will insure a single mortgage on the buildings to a mortgagee acceptable to them. At that point, the Redevelopment Authority can take title and sell the building to one buyer or a group of buyers. There are eight buildings altogether. It would cost us about $7,000 or $8,000 to tear down those buildings at the present time, and we have not got the money. The assessments on these buildings, if we could get them fixed up, would be in the neighborhood of $32,000, whereas the present assessments are around $20,000. This is merely a test case and I think it will work."

Lloyd Sinclair offered the information that under Section 26 AAA, the Administration Program section, the Authority has the legal power to follow the procedure as outlined by Mr. Murray.

Mr. Murray, continuing, stated "Regarding the Castle Square area, we have known for several months that consideration was being given to the extension of the New York Streets to this area. We accomplished a lot of work in this area before it was announced as a proposed redevelopment area. We halted operations temporarily but went back in there, took another look, and now have some buildings under demolition and some others that will be under contract within the next week or two. I think it might be well to consider that the project is far enough ahead to recommend the freezing of city-owned lots in that area. I am talking about the Castle Square section only." Mr. McCormick pointed out that his department is freezing all city-owned lots in the Roxbury area because of the proposed Innerbelt and other factors. Mr. Sinclair pointed out that the Castle Square Extension Project has not been officially or formally announced up to the present time.

Mr. Murray then suggested that we endeavor to foreclose existing tax liens in cases where we do not yet have title, in order that we might clean up some of our outstanding tax bills.

After a brief discussion on the above suggestions, and after a motion made by Mr. Murray and seconded by Mr. Robert Morgan, it was

VOTED:

1) That the Director of Administrative Services inform Herman Carp that it is the desire of this Committee that all City-owned properties in the proposed Castle Square Extension area be withheld from possible sale until further notice;

2) That the Director of Administrative Services inform the Corporation Counsel that it is the desire of this Committee that steps be taken to foreclose all existing tax liens in all such cases where we do not have title at the present time, in order to expedite the collecting of outstanding Real Estate taxes.

The Fire Commissioner reported that he has not heard anything further on the Bowdoin Square Fire Station plans, probably due to the fact that final decision has not been made on the location of the new Government Center.

VOTED: To adjourn at 12:00 Noon, subject to the call of the Chairman.

Attest:

Lawrence W. Costello,
Secretary.